

Anonymous (1812)

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By the kindness of a friend the author has been favored with the reading of a letter from Wheeling, Virginia, on the banks of the Ohio, dated February 17, 1812. The writer was formerly a resident of Philadelphia, and from his well known character for veracity and intelligence, his statement, it is believed, may be implicitly relied upon; as it contains a distinct and comprehensive relation of all the shocks which came under his notice, from the first, on the morning of the sixteenth Dec. to the time when the letter was written, it will constitute a very appropriate termination of this history.

We were surprised by the earthquake which happened on the morning of the sixteenth of December last. It awoke me. I immediately ascertained it to be an earthquake, called all the children up, and prepared them for the worse events. It caused the house to crack loudly in all its joints, as well as the doors, windows, and bedsteads. Since then we have experienced a great many others, some of equal, but the greater part of lesser violence. As I made some notes at various times, perhaps a transcript may not be unacceptable. Monday sixteenth December, 1811, had a shock of earthquake at Wheeling, between two and three o'clock, A.M. which continued about fifteen minutes. It appears from those persons who happened to be awake at its commencement, that it came on gradually, until it advanced in strength to make the houses and bedsteads crack loudly. It then gradually went off. About eight A.M. it was again felt, but not so violent in its undulation as before. At a quarter before one P.M. it was again experienced, but much weaker; but the surface of pools continued to show a small motion for some hours afterwards. On the seventeenth at noon, a faint shock was again felt - also on the twenty-fourth at two o'clock in the morning. First January 1812, a slight one, between eleven and twelve at night, and again at three the next morning. Twenty-third January at about fifteen minutes past nine A.M. experienced a shock nearly equal to the first one of sixteenth December preceding. Twenty-seventh January between eight and nine A.M. a slight shock was sensible to a few persons, and at noon, a motion of the earth was perceptible. Sixth February a slight shock was felt about four P.M. but on the morning of the seventh, a few minutes after four o'clock, a severe shock was experienced, and by most persons judged to be more severe than anything preceding.